A COMICS INTERVIEW PUBLICATION

X-THIEVES™

#7

$1.75
$2.50 in Canada

FEB

NO EXIT

STARRING SPARKY

THE ELECTRICAL VIRUS

"MY CAR — MY ENEMY!"

Comics Interview

So far, there are only four titles from David Anthony Kraft's publishing company, but I like all of them.

• *MICRA* is an acronym for *M*ind *C*ontrolled *R*emote *A*utomaton. It is also one heck of a good comic book by Lamar Waldron and Ted Boonthanakit. This is a 12-issue limited series about a crippled woman who can project her consciousness into an automaton (see the title).

That is a much-too-simplified summation of a rich, complex SF novel in comic-book form. Ted's art has been compared to many different American artists (none of whose work Ted has seen; he was born in Thailand and grew up in Africa) and is remarkably clear and exciting.

Grade: A.

MICRA™
MIND CONTROLLED REMOTE AUTOMATON

• *Aristocratic X-traterrestrial Time-Traveling Thieves* (*X-Thieves* for short) has had two first issues, which is annoying to indexers and compilers of price guides, but the bright, sprightly scripts by Henry Vogel and the appropriately humorous art of Mark Propst make up for that. One of the main features of this comic book is that, like the *Mad* comic books, the panels are filled with gags, such as the crisis hotline which warns: "New universe forming — disaster imminent!"

The Southern Knights make a guest appearance in the second first issue, in which the X-Thieves steal the formula for original Coca-Cola. This is one of the best of the funny comic books (and one of the handful that really *is* funny).

Grade: A.

X-THIEVES™

SOUTHERN KNIGHTS™

• I haven't seen the last couple of issues of *Southern Knights* yet but, unless the series has gone radically downhill since #16, this is still one of the best and most original of all the supergroups. Grade: A.

• While *Comics Interview* is not a comic book, I think I can squeeze in a recommendation. This excellent publication gives a well-rounded view of the industry, with interviews with writers, pencillers, inkers, letterers, colorists, and others.

Naturally, your interest in an issue will depend on who is being interviewed, but there have been 40 issues of *Comics Interview* and no totally dull ones — not even the *G.I. Joe* issue. Grade: A.

Four titles.
Four As. Four for four. Way to go, Dave.

— Don Thompson
COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE
February 13, 1987

Copyright © 1987 Fictioneer Books Ltd.

Look for our distinctive logo —

A COMICS INTERVIEW PUBLICATION

— to find titles you can trust!

ARISTOCRATIC X-TRATERRESTRIAL TIME-TRAVELING THIEVES

FIGHT SCENE

SOMEWHERE IN THE GAS TORUS SURROUNDING NIVEN'S STAR...
JEHT AND SON
OUR WORRIES ARE OVER, BIANCA! I'M SURE THE RUSTIC IN CHARGE OF THIS QUAINT SERVICE ESTABLISHMENT WILL NO DOUBT HAVE US ON OUR WAY IN NO TIME!
OPEN TILL DARK
J.S.
ICE
I DON'T KNOW, FRED -- YOU ALSO SAID THE FREDMOBILE NEVER BROKE DOWN... I'VE GOT A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS DUMP!

SCRIPT / PLOT **HENRY VOGEL**

ART / PLOT **MARK PROPST**

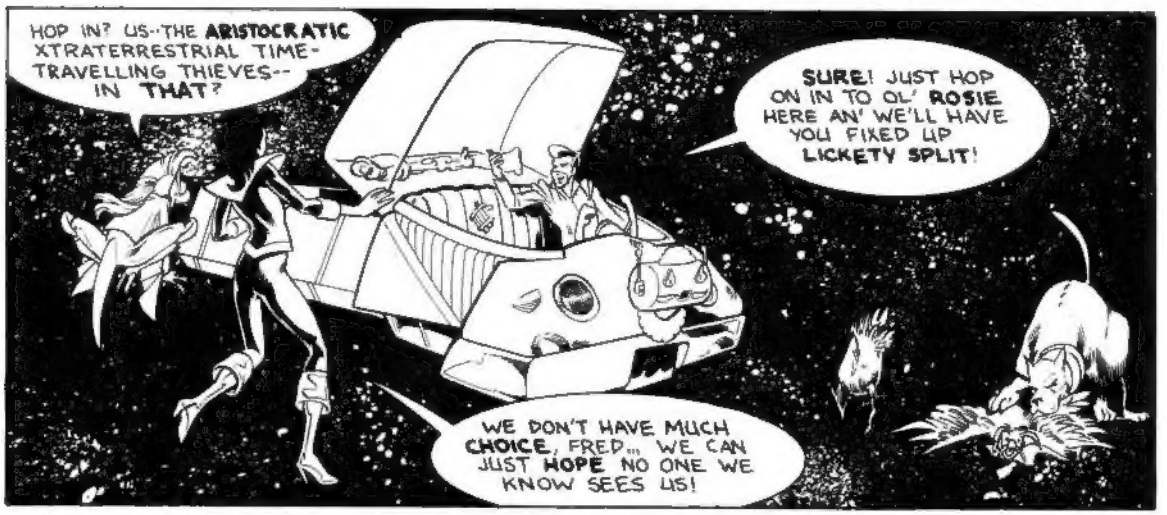
LETTERS **JERRY FRAZEE**

EDITS **DWIGHT JON ZIMMERMAN**

A VOGEL, PROPST, KRAFT CREATION!

ARISTOCRATIC X-TRATERRESTRIAL TIME-TRAVELING THIEVES No. 7,. Feb. 1988. A COMICS INTERVIEW PUBLICATION
Published Bi-Monthly by Fictioneer Books, Ltd., Suite 301, 234 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10001. US: $1.75, Canada: $2.50
Copyright © 1988 Vogel, Propst, Kraft. All rights reserved. David Anthony Kraft, publisher. First printing.

WHY, I KNOW YOU! YOU'RE-- SHUT UP RASTRO! STUPID DOG! YOU'RE THEM X-THIEVES, FRED AND BIANCA!
SAY, YOU AIN'T HERE TO ROB US, IS YOU?
ARF ARF ARF
NO-- JUST SOME CAR TROUBLE... UM, YOU DON'T WANT TO BE ROBBED, DO YOU?
ROSIE II
WELL, IT'D SURE LIVEN THINGS UP 'ROUND HERE! AIN'T NOTHIN' BEEN THE SAME SINCE THE SHOW GOT CANNED!
CLUCK CLUCK CLUCK
WOOF WOOF
SHOW? HE DOES LOOK FAMILIAR-- WONDER WHO HE WAS?
HE COULD HAVE BEEN BUGS BUNNY FOR ALL I CARE! I JUST WANT TO GET THE CAR FIXED!
YOU CAN FIX A TARDIS 40 SPACE YACHT, CAN'T YOU?
WHY SHO' NUFF LI'L LADY! JUST HOP IN AND SHOW ME THE WAY!
2


HOP IN? US--THE ARISTOCRATIC XTRATERRESTRIAL TIME-TRAVELLING THIEVES-- IN THAT?
SURE! JUST HOP ON IN TO OL' ROSIE HERE AN' WE'LL HAVE YOU FIXED UP LICKETY SPLIT!
WE DON'T HAVE MUCH CHOICE, FRED... WE CAN JUST HOPE NO ONE WE KNOW SEES US!

YOU WOULDN'T SAY THAT IF'N I HAD MY OLD CAR! NOW DON'T GET ME WRONG, OL' ROSIE'LL GET ME WHERE I WANT TO GO--
--BUT MY OLD CAR WAS REALLY SOMETHING ELSE! IT TURNED INTO A BRIEFCASE AT THE TOUCH OF A BUTTON!
A BRIEFCASE? MY, MY-- WHAT WILL THEY THINK OF NEXT?
FORTUNATELY FOR THE THIEVES THE RIDE IS BLISSFULLY SHORT AND NO ONE SEES THEM IN OL' ROSIE...

...BUT IT WILL TAKE DAYS FOR THE SMELL OF OIL AND STALE CIGARETTES TO FADE FROM THEIR MEMORY!
I THINK I'M GOING CRAZY! DOESN'T HE KNOW ANY OTHER SONGS?
♪ HIS BOY ELROY ♪ DAUGHTER ♫ JUDY ♪
I DON'T THINK SO-- WHY ELSE WOULD HE SING THAT DAMN SONG 47 TIMES IN A ROW?
WELL, I FOUND YOUR PROBLEMS, THE DOOFLOPPY IS BROKE, THE FRAMISTAT IS OUT OF ALIGNMENT, AND THE WIDGET'S RUSTED OUT.
WON'T TAKE NO TIME TO FIX, THOUGH!

WITH AN APPROPRIATELY HIGH PRICE, TOO, NO DOUBT! I KNOW HIGHWAY ROBBERY WHEN I SEE IT!
HEY, HEY, HEY! A NEW CAR!
ROSIE II
HA, HA! I CAN MOVE IN BODY AND SOUL! MY SOUL AND ITS BODY!
HI, THERE!
WHAT THE HELL--?
THERE! GOT IT ALL FIXED UP! BETTER'N NEW!
ZAP!
OH, NO! NO!
AAGH! NOT MY CAR!
4

BETTER YOUR CAR THAN MINE, FREDDY BOY! WOW, JANE'LL BE SO HAPPY TO HEAR I FINALLY GOT RID OF THAT PEST!
FRED-- JEHT'S LEAVING!
FORGET HIM! WHAT'S HAPPENED TO MY CAR?
UH, UH! IT'S NOT YOURS ANYMORE! IT'S MINE, MINE, MINE!
AND I CAN DO ANYTHING I WANT WITH THIS BODY!
LIKE BE ON TV! I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO BE ON TV!
LOOK YOU-- YOU-- WHATEVER YOU ARE-- GIVE ME BACK MY CAR!
YEAH-- GET OUT OF THERE! UM-- WHAT ARE YOU, ANYWAY?
I DON'T CARE WHAT HE IS! I JUST--
5

NOW HEEEEERE'S SPARKY! SPARKY THE ELECTRICAL VIRUS!
WHAT'S BUGGING YOU, BUDDY? GET IT? VIRUS? BUGGING YOU? PRETTY FUNNY!
JUST WHAT I NEED TO ROUND OUT MY DAY-- A HI-TEC GERM!
'EY, WHO YOU CALLIN' A GERM, EH? I AIN'T NO GERM, GIANT!
VIRUS, GERM-- WHO CARES! GET OUT OF OUR CAR OR YOU'LL BE SORRY!
I'LL BE SORRY?
UM, WELL...
NOW SAY YOU'RE SORRY FOR CALLING ME A GERM!
NO.
NO?
YES, NO.
OOOOO! THAT MAKES ME MAD!

AND WHEN I GET MAD, I BLOW THIEVES' HEADS OFF!
THAT'S RIGHT! BE A BULLY! DON'T FIGHT FAIR!
BULLY? NO WAY I'M A BULLY! LITTLE GUYS LIKE ME AIN'T BULLIES!
THERE, BIANCA-- A LITTLE FIRMNESS, THAT'S ALL IT TAKES!
ONCE I SHOWED HIM WHO'S BOSS HE GOT REASONABLE!
IS THIS BETTER?
SAY WHAT-?
WELL, I CAN'T BE A BULLY IF I'M THE SAME SIZE AS YOU!
UHHH!
WHAP!
FRED!
DING! AND THAT'S THE END OF THE FIRST ROUND, FOLKS!
SPARKY H-THIEVES
7

NOW THAT YOU KNOW I CAN PLAY FAIR AND WIN--

YOU CALL **THAT** PLAYING FAIR?

SURE, ALL'S FAIR IN **LOVE** AND **GALACTIC CONQUEST**! BUT AS I WAS SAYING--NOW THAT I'VE PLAYED FAIR **ONCE**, I DON'T **HAVE** TO DO IT ANY MORE!

YOU **DON'T**?

NOPE! WANT TO KNOW **WHY**?

NOT REALLY-- **YIKES**!

POOF

I'M GLAD YOU **ASKED**! I DON'T HAVE TO PLAY FAIR ANY MORE BECAUSE THIS WAY IS MORE **FUN**!

HOLY **ENTANGLEMENT**! LOOKS LIKE I'VE **GOT** YOU!

HEY! **STOP** IT!

I'M NOT INTO **BONDAGE**, DAMMIT!

SPARKY 2 X-THIEVES GOTTA

AND THERE YOU HAVE IT, **SPORTS FANS**! THE **INCREDIBLE**, THE **AMAZING**, THE **UNBEATABLE SPARKY** HAS SHUT OUT THE **X-THIEVES**! WHAT A **GUY**!

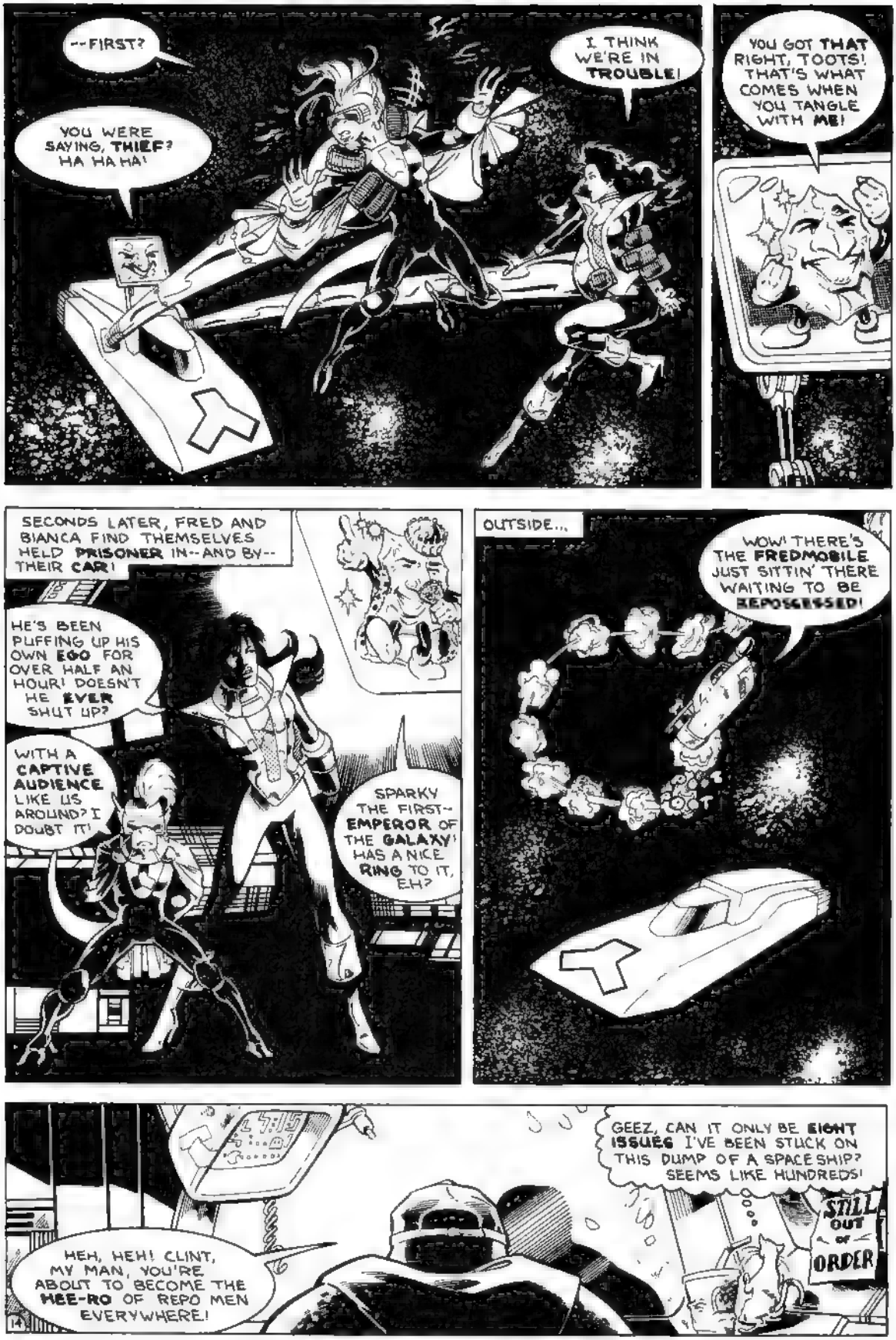
THAT STUPID VIRUS IS ACTING LIKE A CHIHUAHUA IN A DOBERMAN'S BODY!
YEAH... I'D LOVE TO GET HIM ALONE IN A MAGNETIC FIELD FOR JUST A FEW SECONDS!
WELL GUYS, IT'S BEEN REAL AND IT'S BEEN FUN--
--AND I HOPE YOU LEARNED NOT TO MESS WITH NUMBER ONE! THAT'S ME, OF COURSE!
NOT YOU! OUR CAR!
ONE AND THE SAME, FREDDY! OH MY! LOOK AT THE TIME!
I'VE GOT TO BE GOING!
WITH YOUR CAR!
TRY AND STOP ME! HEH, HEH!
AFTER THIS IS OVER REMIND ME TO GET A SURGE PROTECTOR FOR THE CAR
OKAY-- BUT WHAT DO WE DO RIGHT NOW?

PSSST PSSST
PSSST PSSST
PSSST PSSST
YOU GO ON AND TAKE THE CAR, SPARKY.
YEAH, KEEP IT. WE'RE TIRED OF THIS!
Y-YOU DON'T WANT TO FIGHT ANY MORE?
NOPE -- THE CAR'S YOURS! WE'VE GOT BETTER THINGS TO DO WITH OUR TIME!
OH YEAH?
WELL, MAYBE OL' SPARKY DOESN'T HAVE BETTER THINGS TO DO!
AND WHAT SPARKY WANTS, SPARKY GETS!
HA! JUST YOU WAIT AND SEE!
NO, YOU'LL SEE!
YOU CAN'T MAKE US FIGHT YOU, SPARKY!
NICE OF YOU TO LET US KEEP THIS ROPE, SPARKY!
10

WHY DID YOU LASSO--
OOPS...
TWANG
HAPPY LANDING, SPARKY!
OH...
NOOOOOO!
THINK THE CAR CAN TAKE THAT, FRED?
SURE! BUT MAYBE SPARKY CAN'T!
BLAM
NOT TOO FAR AWAY...
EXPLOSION REPORTED IN SECTOR 14. INVESTIGATE IMMEDIATELY!
UH, ROGER, BASE!

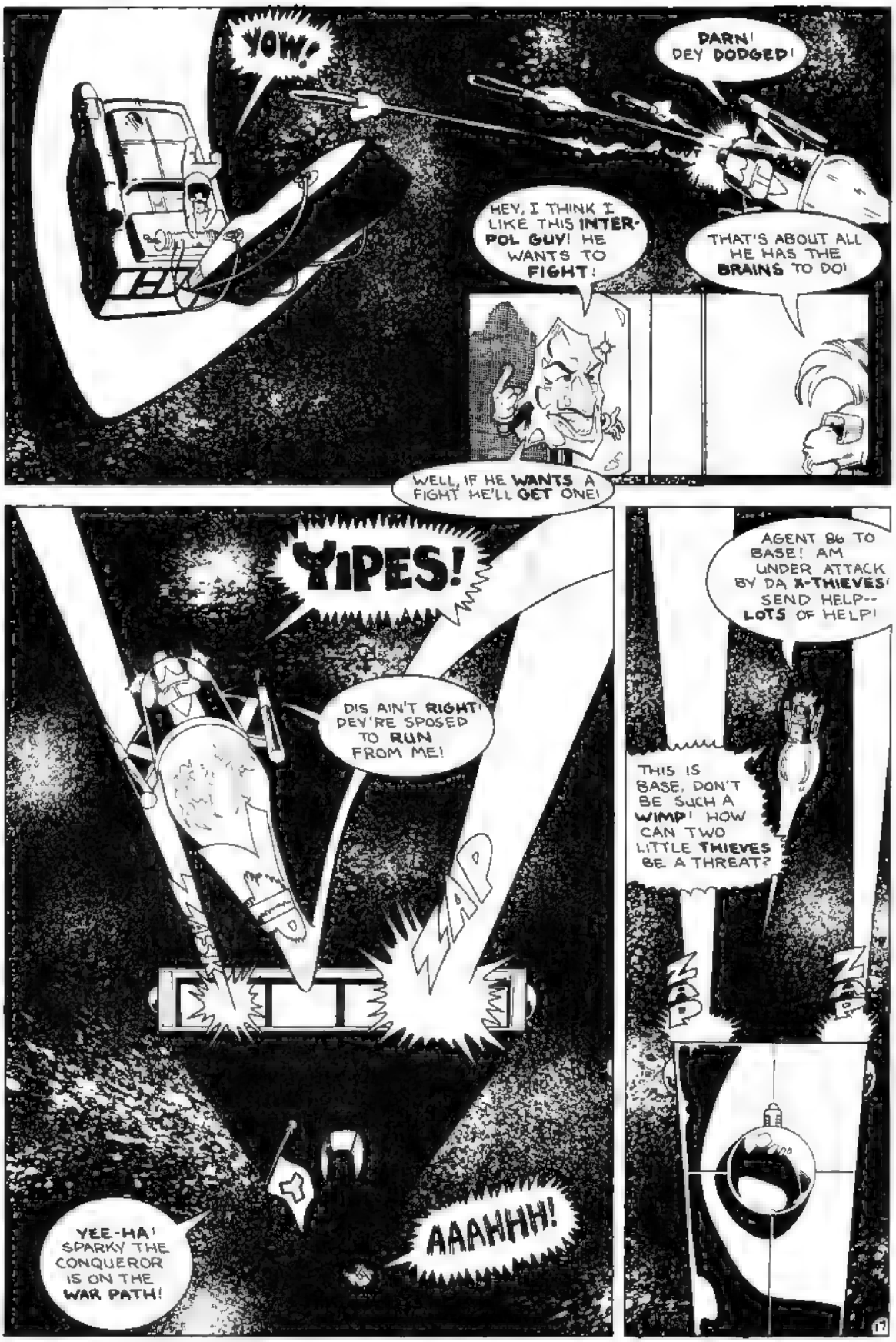
AND TRY NOT TO DESTROY ANYTHING WHILE YOU'RE THERE!
AWWW!
ARE YOU SURE THE FREDMOBILE CAN TAKE A BLAST LIKE THAT?
WELL, PRETTY SURE..
OH NO! MY STATION-- IT'S GONE!
NOW I'LL HAVE TO GO BACK TO WORK FOR THAT RUNT SPACELY!
WOW! WHAT A NEAT FIRE!
GEE, IT SURE IS HOT OUT HERE!
YEAH, MAKES ME THIRSTY!
HOT AND THIRSTY? I CAN FIX THAT!
OH YEAH! SPARKY'S BACK!
WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?
JUDY! SUCH LANGUAGE!
FRED, LET'S FACE IT -- LIFE HERE IN THIS OXYGEN BELT MUST BE EVEN SILLIER THAN LIFE AS WE NORMALLY KNOW IT!
AGREED!

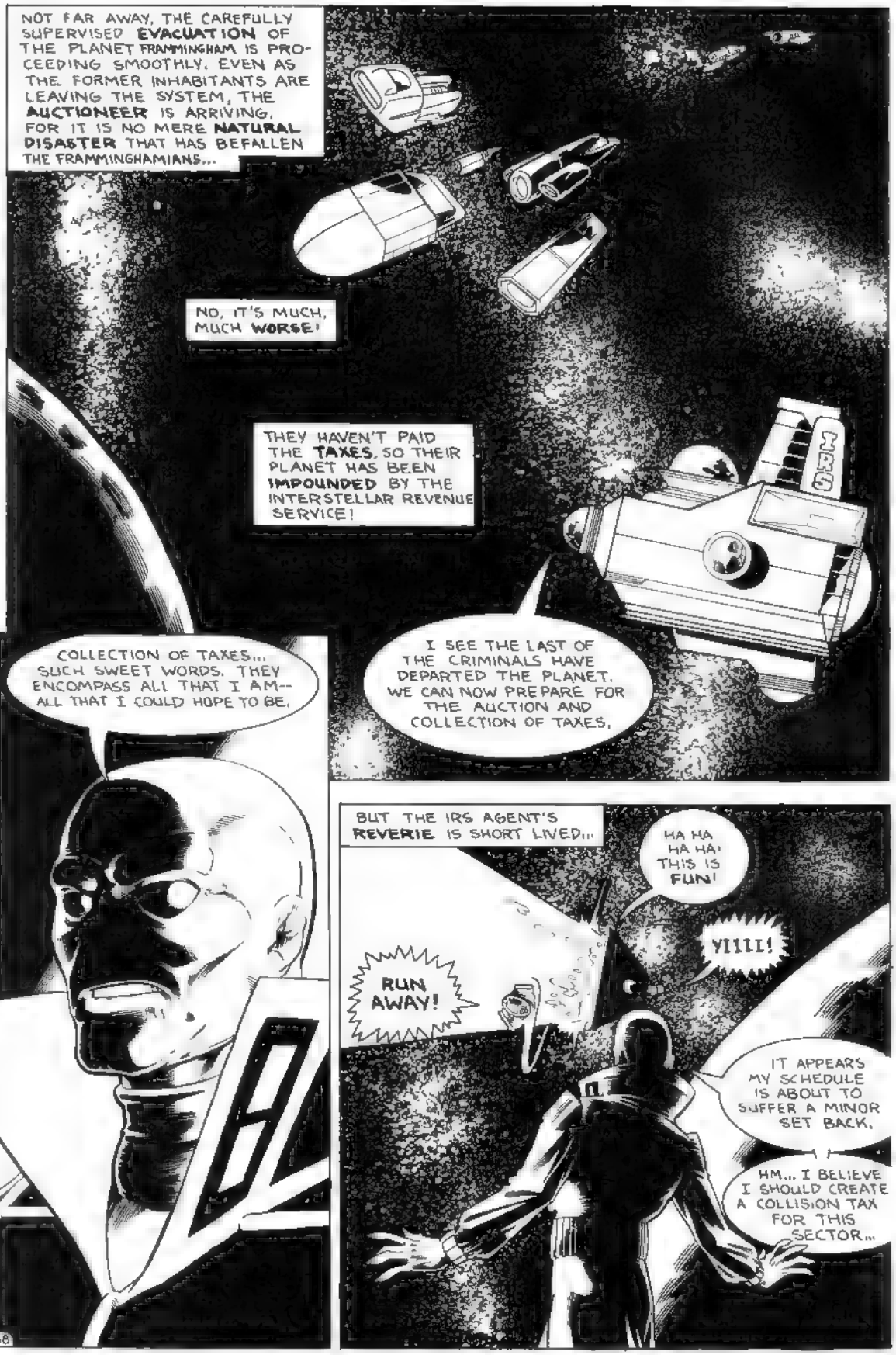
BUT RIGHT NOW WE'RE STUCK HERE UNTIL WE GET THE FREDMO-- or... MY CAR BACK! SO LET'S DO IT!
IF YOU SAY SO... ARE YOU READY FOR THE LAUNCH?
READY!
UP, UP, AND AWAY!
I HOPE THIS WORKS-- I CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE OF SPARKY'S BAD JOKES!
BOING
I'VE GOT YOU NOW, SPARKY!
OH, YEAH?
SPLOOSH
OH NO! YOU'LL PUT OUT THE FIRE!
THIN, CHERRY-AID FLAVORED SMOKE DRIFTS UP FROM THE EXTINGUISHED FIRE AS A RED-COVERED FRED CLIMBS OUT OF SPARKY'S PITCHER...
GAKE YUCK! COUGHE I HOPE THERE AREN'T ANY FLIES AROUND!
NO FAIR! YOU PUT OUT MY FIRE! I'LL GET YOU FOR THAT!
GET ME? HA! YOU'LL HAVE TO CATCH ME--
MMM! CHERRY!
13


--FIRST?
YOU WERE SAYING, THIEF? HA HA HA!
I THINK WE'RE IN TROUBLE!
YOU GOT THAT RIGHT, TOOTS! THAT'S WHAT COMES WHEN YOU TANGLE WITH ME!
SECONDS LATER, FRED AND BIANCA FIND THEMSELVES HELD PRISONER IN--AND BY--THEIR CAR!
HE'S BEEN PUFFING UP HIS OWN EGO FOR OVER HALF AN HOUR! DOESN'T HE EVER SHUT UP?
WITH A CAPTIVE AUDIENCE LIKE US AROUND? I DOUBT IT!
SPARKY THE FIRST--EMPEROR OF THE GALAXY! HAS A NICE RING TO IT, EH?
OUTSIDE...
WOW! THERE'S THE FREDMOBILE JUST SITTIN' THERE WAITING TO BE REPOSSESSED!
GEEZ, CAN IT ONLY BE EIGHT ISSUES I'VE BEEN STUCK ON THIS DUMP OF A SPACESHIP? SEEMS LIKE HUNDREDS!
STILL OUT OF ORDER
HEH, HEH! CLINT, MY MAN, YOU'RE ABOUT TO BECOME THE HEE-RO OF REPO MEN EVERYWHERE!
14

ONLY ONE PROBLEM WITH THIS--NO INTENSITY!
CREAK
I NEVER WOULD'VE BELIEVED I COULD GRAB THE FREDMOBILE WITHOUT IT BEIN' THE MOST INTENSE MOMENT OF MY LIFE!
THERE! INTENSITY OR NO, I'M ABOUT TO STEP INTO THE REPOSSESSION LIMELIGHT!
INSIDE...
WHO IS THAT TWIT OUT THERE?
A MINOR IRRITANT-NOBODY IMPORTANT.
I CAN TELL THAT! WHAT DOES HE WANT?
THE CAR--HE WORKS FOR A COMPANY THAT HAS THE ANTIQUATED NOTION WE SHOULD PAY FOR IT...
IS THAT SO? WELL, WE CAN'T HAVE THAT! ESPECIALLY SINCE THIS CAR IS NOW MINE!
WHOA! I SPOKE TOO SOON--LOOKS LIKE THINGS ARE ABOUT TO GET INTENSE!
5

OH, THIS IS GREAT! LOOK AT THAT MORON! ONCE I'M EMPEROR I THINK I'LL MAKE HIM MY COURT JESTER!
WHOOSH
HEEELLLIPPP!
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
THIS IS RICH! I LIKE YOUR-- OOPS, MY-- CAR A WHOLE LOT!
NEARBY...
MARK! WAS DAT A CALL FOR HELP I HEARD?
YEP! AN' LOOK WHERE IT CAME FROM!
IT'S DA FREDCAR! AN' I CAUGHT 'EM IN DA ACT OF KIDNAPPING SOME POOR INNOCENT SCHMUCK!
HANG ON HELPLESS VICTIM! AGENT B6 OF DA INTERSTELLAR POLICE IS HERE TO SAVE YA!
DIS OUGHTA TEACH DEM WOULD-BE KIDNAPPERS!
SURE HOPE DA VICTIM SURVIVES!
16


YOW!
DARN! DEY DODGED!
HEY, I THINK I LIKE THIS INTER-POL GUY! HE WANTS TO FIGHT!
THAT'S ABOUT ALL HE HAS THE BRAINS TO DO!
WELL IF HE WANTS A FIGHT HE'LL GET ONE!
YIPES!
DIS AIN'T RIGHT! DEY'RE SPOSED TO RUN FROM ME!
ZIP
ZAP
ZAP
YEE-HA! SPARKY THE CONQUEROR IS ON THE WAR PATH!
AAAHHH!
AGENT 86 TO BASE! AM UNDER ATTACK BY DA X-THIEVES! SEND HELP-- LOTS OF HELP!
THIS IS BASE, DON'T BE SUCH A WIMP! HOW CAN TWO LITTLE THIEVES BE A THREAT?
ZAP
ZAP
17


NOT FAR AWAY, THE CAREFULLY SUPERVISED **EVACUATION** OF THE PLANET FRAMMINGHAM IS PROCEEDING SMOOTHLY. EVEN AS THE FORMER INHABITANTS ARE LEAVING THE SYSTEM, THE **AUCTIONEER** IS ARRIVING. FOR IT IS NO MERE **NATURAL DISASTER** THAT HAS BEFALLEN THE FRAMMINGHAMIANS...
NO, IT'S MUCH, MUCH **WORSE!**
THEY HAVEN'T PAID THE **TAXES.** SO THEIR PLANET HAS BEEN **IMPOUNDED** BY THE INTERSTELLAR REVENUE SERVICE!
I SEE THE LAST OF THE CRIMINALS HAVE DEPARTED THE PLANET. WE CAN NOW PREPARE FOR THE AUCTION AND COLLECTION OF TAXES.
COLLECTION OF TAXES... SUCH SWEET WORDS. THEY ENCOMPASS ALL THAT I AM-- ALL THAT I COULD HOPE TO BE.
BUT THE IRS AGENT'S **REVERIE** IS SHORT LIVED...
HA HA HA HA! THIS IS **FUN!**
YIIII!
RUN AWAY!
IT APPEARS MY SCHEDULE IS ABOUT TO SUFFER A MINOR SET BACK.
HM... I BELIEVE I SHOULD CREATE A COLLISION TAX FOR THIS SECTOR...
8

UM, SPARKY-- THE BRAKES!
WITH A LOUD EXPLOSION THAT COULD ONLY BE HEARD IN A GAS TORUS IN SPACE THE INTERPOL SHIP PLOWS INTO THE IRS VESSEL!
HA HA! SPARKY GETS TWO MORE!
KABLAM
YOU IDIOT! STOP BEFORE WE CRASH TOO!
WHOA!

BITCH, BITCH, BITCH! IS THAT ALL YOU THIEVES KNOW HOW TO DO? OF COURSE I PLANNED TO STOP! SHEESH!
WHIP
OH NO! MY TOW CABLES!

SNAP
I'M GETTING TOO OLD FOR THIS KIND OF INTENSITY!

LOCKED TOGETHER, THE IRS AND INTERPOL SHIPS GYRATE WILDLY TOWARD THE **PLANET** BELOW, AND, WITH ONLY SLIGHTLY MORE **CONTROL**, CLINT'S CRAFT PLUNGES AFTER THEM...

WELL, CRETIN, ARE YOU PLEASED WITH YOUR HANDIWORK? THIS PLANET IS UNINHABITED. WE ARE STRANDED.

HUH?

OOF!

YOUCH!

BUMP

BUMP

A **SHIP**! JUST WHAT I NEED!

YOUR OBSERVATION IS CORRECT-- UP TO A POINT. THE SHIP IS MINE.

SIR, AS AN AGENT OF THE IRS, I AM TAKING YOUR VEHICLE FOR OFFICIAL TAXATION PURPOSES.

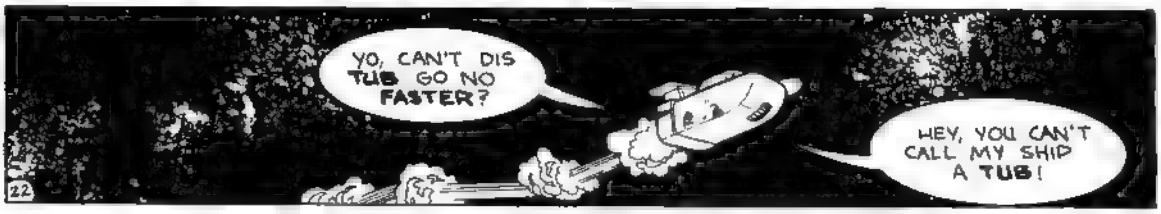
NO WAY, **BALDY**! DAT SHIP IS **MINE**! I'M TAKIN' IT FOR REAL **INTERPOL** STUFF!

SAY **WHAT**? NEITHER OF YOU IS GETTING MY SHIP! I GOTTA REPOSSESS THE **FREDMOBILE**!

OH, BOY! THAT WAS SUCH FUN! LET'S FIND ANOTHER FIGHT!
LET'S NOT, SPARKY.
FRED, WHATCHA GOT THERE?
OH, JUST SOME MAGNETS! YOU SAID SOMETHING EARLIER ABOUT A MAGNET FIELD, REMEMBER?
HERE, HAVE ONE!
YOW!
DON'T RUN, SPARKY! I'VE GOT A PRESENT FOR YOU!
HEH HEH! WORKS LIKE A CHARM, BABE!
OUCH! OOOO! STOP THAT!
WHAT'S THE MATTER, SPARKY? DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU WANTED TO FIND ANOTHER FIGHT?
YOU CAN RUN, SPARKY, BUT YOU CAN'T HIDE!
THIS IS NO FUN! STOP IT, PLEASE!
SAY GOOD-BYE, SPARKY!
AFTER ALL THE FUN YOU'VE GIVEN US? OH, WE WOULDN'T DREAM OF NOT RETURNING THE FAVOR!

W-W-WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO TO ME?
IF I TOLD YOU, THAT WOULD RUIN THE SURPRISE-- AND I COULDN'T DO THAT! BUT I COULD GIVE YOU A HINT!
LOOK UP.
AAAAA! THE ENGINE PODS!
BINGO!
BEEP

BYE, BYE, SPARKY!
NOOOOOO!
WHOOSH


YO, CAN'T DIS TUB GO NO FASTER?
HEY, YOU CAN'T CALL MY SHIP A TUB!

I'M IN CHARGE SO I CAN CALL IT ANYTHING I WANT!
YOU ARE MOST ASSUREDLY NOT IN CHARGE, TAXATION MUST TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER THE CAPTURE OF COMMON CRIMINALS!
NEITHER ONE OF YOU'S IN CHARGE! I'M JUST GIVING YOU A LIFT!
I'M IN CHARGE!
INCORRECT. I AM, OH YES, HAVE YOU PAID ALL THE PROPER TAXES ON THIS VESSEL, SIR?
ZAP
BOTH OF YOU ARE NUTS! IT'S MY SHIP AND I'M IN CHARGE!
HA HA HA! YOU'RE ALL WRONG! I'M IN CHARGE!
HUH?
SIR, ELECTRICAL ENTITIES ARE NOT EXEMPT FROM TAXATION. HAVE YOU PAID YOUR TAXES?
IT'S GOT CONTROL OF MY SHIP!
NOT AS NICE AS MY LAST SHIP-- BUT...
KNOW WHERE WE CAN FIND ANY GOOD FIGHTS?
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
END

"X-THIEVES" X-TRA!

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

Dear Henry,

Two things.

First, I wanted to let you know that I much enjoyed X-THIEVES #4, as I have all the previous issues. You show no signs of losing your edge for fast-paced humor, and Mark Propst continues to amaze me with his ability to include so much detail into panels and panels into pages without making things look cluttered. A first-class act all the way around!

Second, I've enclosed a copy of a letter I'm sending to T.M. Maple, whoever he/she is, regarding the relationship (or should I say identity) of taxes and thievery. Since you declined to engage him in debate, I though I'd butt in and try my hand at it. Hope you don't mind.

Scott Bieser
8155 Southwestern Blvd. #233
Dallas, TX 75206

Thanks for the kind things you say about the X-THIEVES! And, I hope you don't mind if we run your reply to TM here along with your letter!

Dear "T.M.,"

As far as political debating goes, I can't restrain myself as well as Henry's wife can restrain him. So I'm inviting myself, as another libertarian, to carry on in Henry's place, even though of course I cannot exactly claim to speak for him. (But I am sending him a copy of this letter so he can chastise me if he so desires if I say something he objects to.)

The original point of contention, as I recall, was the morality, or lack thereof, of government extortion. You have stated that this activity is proper because it is carried out "by freely elected officials. . . for the general welfare and protection of the people."

I'll address the first part of this argument first. Let's take the hypothetical case of Smith, who has some money, and Jones, who desires that money owned by Smith. If Jones were to take the money from Smith by threat of force, we would agree that this is thievery. Now, if Jones were joined by his friend Brown, and the two of them extorted the money from Smith, we would still regard this as an immoral act, even though their number is greater. If Jones gathered together a gang of 10 people, and similarly robbed Smith, the act would be just as immoral as if Jones were acting alone.

So, if it is wrong for one man to rob another, then it is also wrong for two men, or ten men, or a thousand, or a million, or a hundred million, to commit extortion. And yet this is precisely what you attempt to justify in the name of "majority rule." If Smith and company wish to cloak themselves in the mystical mantle of democratic "government" they may certainly hoodwink a lot of people into accepting their depredations, but in fact they are still nothing more than a band of thieves.

Moving for a moment from the abstract to the practical, another way in which the X-THIEVES are better than the IRS, you're dealing with a meddling monster which hounds you year after year, demanding to know all kinds of very personal details about your life, and you find yourself making many economic decisions based on how it will sit with the IRS rather than what would otherwise provide the best return on your labor and/or investment.

The second part of your argument, that government extortion is justified because it provides for a variety of necessary and desirable services, falls back on the idea that good ends justify evil means.

Returning to our hypothetical Smith and Jones, let's suppose Jones has robbed Smith so that he could give the money to a needy orphanage. While we may regard this as a mitigating circumstance in judging Jones, this in no way should cause us to excuse Jones altogether, much less encourage him to rob everyone he can so long as he forwards the loot to worthy causes. We would tell Jones that if he wishes to aid orphans or support the local ballet, he must persuade Smith and others to make voluntary contributions for the benefit of orphans and ballerinas. And as we've seen before, an action that is immoral for Jones to take on his own initiative is also wrong for him to take in concert with a gang ranging in size from two to a democratic majority.

About 90 percent of government-provided services certainly could be provided by alternative, *voluntary* means. Such activities as garbage collection, fire protection and road construction can be paid for directly by the recipients of these services, through fees, tolls, and insurance plans. Charitable activities such as aid to needy children, homeless adults, and "cultural arts" should and can be funded through voluntary contributions — comparison studies of similar types of charitable activities by United Way private agencies and government bureaucracy demonstrate that the private agencies manage to get a much larger share of money collected to the actual needy people and much less to administrative overhead than do the government bureaucracies. The private agencies *have* to be more efficient in order to maintain the faith of their donors. Government bureaucracies protect their income by forming lobbying groups, labor unions and voter blocks.

As for the remaining 10 percent, basically law enforcement and defense against aggressing foreign governments, well, I must admit no one has demonstrated satisfactorily how these activities could be funded voluntarily — yet. The problem is due to the public goods/free rider phenomenon, wherein it is not possible to provide a necessary service only to those who pay for it, and at the same time withhold the service from those who don't pay, without causing considerable havoc in peaceful social interaction. But libertarian philosophers are hard at work on the problem, and if we can at least scale back the amount of extortion-supported activities to a mere 10 percent of the current level, we will have made significant strides in achieving the most just society — one in which a worker or investor gets to keep what he earns and save or spend as he or she thinks best.

I realize that in this two-page letter I have not exactly made an air-tight case for my position, but I think it's a pretty good outline of the parameters. I welcome any response you may care to make.

Scott Bieser

TM, *if you have a reply, we'd be happy to print it!*

Volume 3 of the EARLY DAYS OF THE KNIGHTS

Volume 3 of the early adventures of the **Southern Knights**! The saga of the #1 Super Team of the South continues in this handsome, inexpensive series of graphic albums collecting the sought after early issues.

See the return of those amiable assassins, Carl and Larry — on a murder mission against the Knights! See why Don Thompson of COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE calls the **Southern Knights** "one of the best and most original of all the supergroups"!

If you've never experienced the early adventures, this graphic novel is just what you need to bone up on **Southern Knights** history. And if you're fortunate enough to have read these rare early issues, this collection makes it much easier to reread and refer to them (and you don't have to handle your valuable original editions).

GRAPHIC NOVEL

$4.95
(Canada: $7.95)

A COMICS INTERVIEW PUBLICATION
FICTIONEER BOOKS, LTD. • 234 FIFTH AVE. • SUITE 301-G • NEW YORK, NY 10001

A PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE FROM

FRED & BIANCA

THIEVERY IS BEST LEFT TO TRAINED PROFESSIONALS! AMATEURS NOT ONLY LOWER THE LEVEL OF WORKMANSHIP, THEY COULD ALSO GET HURT!

Copyright © 1986 Vogel, Propst, Kraft.

X-THIEVES™

A Vogel • Propst • Kraft Production

A COMICS INTERVIEW PUBLICATION